1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

535
291
301

TWO DANCERS CRYING OUT TO THE PYTHON.
(*See Section D, Gunabibi Ceremony, page 298.*)

[FRONTISPIECE -
FACING P. iii]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

same moiety is too keen to be overcome by an appeal to moiety solidarity.

Various parts of the ceremonies are used to give expression to the dual division. In the Djungguan ceremony, subsections, when calling up their dead ancestors, are placed in the moiety order; that is, first the four Dua subsections and then the four Yiritja take turns in calling the names and the illustrious deeds of their dead ancestors. At the end of this ceremony, when food is eaten ritualistically, the members of the two groups exchange food. During the Gunabibi only Dua men paint themselves, since it is taboo for Yiritja men so to decorate themselves for this particular ceremony. Dua men, however, cannot construct the great Yer-mer-lin-di totemic emblem, and this duty and privilege devolves upon Yiritja men, in exchange for which service the Dua men present the Yiritja men with food and other presents. The Dua use a round grave post to mark their burial spots or when they wish to erect a monument to the spirit of a newly dead person belonging to their moiety, whereas the coastal Yiritja raise a ceremonial mast for their dead. The Dua use red feather decorations for their Narra ceremonies; the Yiritja use opossum fur.

The totems themselves are largely divided on the basis of the moiety. The list of the clans with their totems, page 39 ff., will show that most clans of one moiety possess their totems in common. There is a considerable regional variation, but the differences are not due to clan divisions. Very occasionally a clan will possess a totem that no other owns, but this is only a temporary condition, for the myth of the two creator women usually is sufficient proof of ownership to other clans, so that in a short time they accept this new totem as their own, provided they belong to the same moiety as the original clan. For example, on the eastern side of Arnhem Land, along the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, all of the Dua clan have totems such as a yam stick, old woman, and young woman, while the Dua clans in the west, which center around the Goyder River, are more concerned with a snake and a complex of totems which surround it, and less with the women and their totemic objects. There seems to be an historical basis for this division which will be discussed later.

The Phratry

There is a weak attempt on the part of the Murngin to form groups of clans within the moiety, based on the mythological idea of a common association with a common creator totem or an alleged similarity

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

small fire. It is used to haft wooden spear heads to their shafts, to articulate the peg of the spear-thrower to the shaft, and also to haft the feathers of some of the larger headdresses to a wooden or bone shaft.

Beeswax is used to join the stone spear head to the shaft, it serves as the core for the various feather headdresses, it is used to make the mouth of the wooden trumpet small enough to fit the lips, and at times it is used as calking material for boats. It is also pushed into the hole always made in the septum to give the nose, for purely aesthetic reasons, a very concave form. (If beeswax is not used, small rings are made by wrapping two ends of cane together with fiber string and inserting them in the hole made in the septum.) When not in use, beeswax is molded into a flat mass and carried in a man's basket.

Human blood or the sap of an orchid bulb (djelkork) is used to glue feathers and paint to the dancers' bodies for the various ceremonies, and to stick these same materials on their totemic emblems. When the bulb is used, it is chewed and the macerated end rubbed on the object to be decorated.

Hafting.—Wooden objects to be hafted together are always carved to fit nicely. Ironwood resin or beeswax is heated and applied to the parts, which are then fitted together and wrapped with fiber string.

III. Murngin Artifacts

In the last few pages we have briefly described the Murngin in relation to their natural environment, the kinds of materials they select from the environment, and the more general techniques used in fashioning their tools. In Appendix II, pages 471-505, we shall describe the various articles of the technology and their manufacture.

Murngin technology is forever subject to two fundamental changes: first, the constant movements from food ground to food ground, and, secondly and more radically, the exigencies of the alternate rainy and more favorable dry seasons. Both are essentially problems of environmental adaptation: the one involves the adjustment of man to his food supply rather than vice versa through an agricultural or pastoral economy; and the other is an adjustment to a semi-annual seasonal change which can best be stated in terms of fifty to sixty inches of rain during three or four months and none at all during the rest of the year. These adjustments have profoundly and fundamentally affected Murngin technology and, as we shall see later, their ritual and myth.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

its magical effect, to insure the boys' acquiring many presents on the journey on which they are sent by the older men, and to enable them always to have plenty of good things during their lives. The above quotation is not a formula and is varied according to the speaker.

The two boys, with a near relative such as an older dué (sister's husband, father's sister's son), are sent out (at times this does not occur), usually on separate paths, to visit the various relatives and clans to invite them to the coming ceremony. The relatives of the boys who are present at the time they are sent away and who belong to outside clans are always desirous that the initiates visit their clans. The father chooses a trail for the boy to follow, but the man who accompanies and protects the boy usually modifies the father's directions to fit the circumstances of the journey.

The neophytes usually stay away a month, but their journey may last two moons, or less than one. If they leave when the moon is full they return when there is a new moon. In later years a man always boasts about the many clans he visited, the great distances he traveled, the long period he was absent on his journey.

The young men are sent away, it is said by the old Murngin men, so that they will meet new people, which is felt to be a good thing, and make lifelong friends among their more distant classificatory relatives. This ritualistic making of friends is not organized among these people as highly as in West Australia, nor does the path followed by the boy occupy as important a place in his later life as it does in West Australian regions.

One Wessel Island boy of the Perango clan went down through Elcho Island, where he visited the clan of that country, through Arnhem Bay and into the country of the Gwiyamil clan.[11] A candidate for initiation from the Wangurri clan went overland to the Barlamomo of Blue Mud Bay.

Before leaving, the boys are given new armlets which are then painted with white clay; white cockatoo feather headdresses are put on them, and their faces are daubed with white paint. Usually a white clay bark band is tied around the forehead. Red ocher and kangaroo fat with a white clay outline are put on the boys' faces. A large hair belt, suspended from which is a painted opossum fur string pubic covering, is put on the initiate for the first time. Before this he has gone completely nude, as do all uncircumcised boys.

Wherever the boy goes on his journey the people are informed of the coming ceremony and invited to attend. All those who are invited give

[11] See the clan and tribal map, page 40.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

1. A week or ten days afterward all the men and women who have participated for the first time in the ceremony are painted with red ocher and kangaroo fat, at least twice. The last time a fire is made of ironwood, and green branches are held in it and brushed all over the initiate.

Native Interpretation.—This ritual is to keep the participants from becoming ill and to prevent them from being hurt by any of the animals seen in the Gunabibi dances. The use of red ocher for purification purposes is general. It is one of the recognized mechanisms of the Murngin ritually to prevent or stop sickness. At the end of the Gunabibi the following comment was made in a variety of forms: "After the next rain a man can come out and see a lot of emus and kangaroos and all kinds of animals. He will say, 'My word, we sang him good in that last Gunabibi.'"

THE ULMARK CEREMONY

The Ulmark ceremony is performed in the dry season. It may last a month, a season, or possibly two dry seasons. In rare cases it may be shortened to a few days. The length of time depends on the leader and the old men associated with him.

Like the Djungguan and the Gunabibi, the Ulmark too is an age-grading ceremony. The boy who undergoes its initiation is placed definitely in the men's age grade. The Ulmark is recent in this area and is still being learned by the older men. It is not yet felt to be obligatory for all men to pass through it to attain social adulthood.

Human blood is not used in the Ulmark ceremony. It is the only one of the four major ceremonies belonging to the Wawilak cycle that does not use blood. Kangaroo grease serves more or less the same symbolical function.

New feather strings are made in preparation for the Ulmark, to be used as ornaments in it. The work of collecting the feathers and making the string is supposed to take a month or more and depends on the supply of feathers available and the amount desired by the men for the dance. Four men who later play the rôle of kangaroos gather the feathers from the various camps and take them to the men's ceremonial grounds at the camp where the ceremony is to be held.

The first three sections are largely preliminary. The first two sections take place simultaneously.

L. Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

of the ceremony and says that he has cut ranga wood and wants to make the totemic emblem. If the time is proper the leader says, "Yes, we will go look at that log to see if it is the right size [for carving]." The old man, with other old men, goes out from the main camp to the totem grounds to see how large the ranga wood is. If it is a big log he says, "I think we'll make a woman ranga." If it is somewhat smaller he says, "I think iguana would be the thing to make." Other young men sometimes say at this time to the leader, "I would like to make a girl ranga." Another one says, "I should like to make a fish ranga," another, "I should like to make a wan-du-ma [mud fish]," and still others say, "We want to make a marn-bur [clitoris]."

The young men who are talking to the old leader are his yukiyuko, gatu, younger bapa, marelker, gurrong, mari, and kutara. The old man says to them, "When this Narra ceremony is finished you can sell the string from these rangas to your relatives, but you must come first and see me and make me a present. You can sell it to the Yiritja, you can sell it to people in the same camp. You can take out the string with parrot feathers on it and make bangles and streamers to hang down from your arms. That makes the arm strong when warding off spears. It will help break the spears." The various totemic emblems are usually made at this time.

2. Late in the afternoon the leader and the initiated men leave the main camp and go out to the men's ceremonial grounds. A small quadrangular dance place has been prepared. This ground is made and used in the same way in the Narra ceremony of the other moiety. The leader takes his singing sticks, the men form themselves into a chorus in front of him. They sing "Um-um-um-wa!" which is to symbolize the running of the fresh water from a totem well located in the interior, and they dance back and forth across the dance ground. When the dancers turn at the end of the ground, they repeat the cry again and the tempo of the rhythm increases, which means that the water is running fast. After this dance has been repeated a great number of times, the leader, followed by his chorus, dances into the main camp. They walk about the place and call out the power names of rain and flood water and the springs that appear after the floods. Finally the leader says, "We will stop." The women give them food and they return to the Narra totemic grounds for further dancing. When they get on the dance ground they cry "Um-um-sis-sis-sis-wa!"

All the power names of water are now called up.

This finishes the dance for the evening. Some of the men return to

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

no other ornamentation upon it. The red ocher is not only for decoration, but it adds spirit "power" to the receptacle.

East of the Goyder River the bag is used exclusively by the medicine man, whose spirit helpers reside in it. West of the Goyder River it is also worn by anyone who so desires for good luck in hunting. Here also it is held in the teeth during a fight to add magical powers and bravery to the fighter.

Fighting "Tie."—Sometimes a "tie" is carried in the mouth to gain power during a fight. The tie is made by the same technique as the spirit bag. It is made of coarse vegetable fiber string, is flat, about eighteen inches long and three inches wide, and has a fiber string handle which allows the owner to wear it around his neck when not in use. It has ornamental value, although it is never decorated except with alternating bands of dark and light fiber.

The netting stitch is not used in the making of bags or the tie in this area as it is in Queensland.

Forehead Bands.—This article of ornamentation is made of small thread-like string with a mesh that is a sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Its length and width correspond to the size of the wearer's forehead. It is worn only by males. Each end of the band has a string attached to it for tying at the back of the head. The bands are used in the Gunabibi, Ulmark, and Djungguan ceremonies. They are covered with a solid layer of white pipe clay or red ocher. Sometimes bands are made of paper bark tied with fiber string and painted with red ocher or white clay.

Women's and Children's "Harness."—This curious body ornament used by women and small children looks, when worn, much like a harness used for hitching horses to a carriage. It is composed of one continuous strand of twelve to eighteen strings of two-ply vegetable fiber. The string is formed into two large equal loops which are joined by wrapping with fiber string for a distance of about ten inches. Each loop is then wrapped separately for from two to five inches from both sides of the joint. The wrapped sections are usually painted with alternating white and red or yellow and red bands of paint. The unwrapped string frequently is covered with red ocher.

Women and children wear the harness during ceremonies. The wrapped portion falls down the middle of the back; the arms are slipped through the loops which are made to cross below the breast.

Bugle-grass Necklace.—The bright straw-yellow bugle grass is cut into small beads about one-half inch in length and strung on a thin vegetable fiber string. The string is then looped back and forth to form about eighteen lengths of ten inches each. To each of the two ends of the bunch of loops is attached a single fiber string. The beads are worn against the throat by tying the fiber strings at the back of the wearer's neck. Men, women, and children wear these ornaments. The bright yellow is particularly effective in contrast with the gleaming black skin of the aborigines.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

301 237 *Fish-vertebrae Necklace.*—The vertebrae of the larger fish, including sharks, are cleaned, bored, covered with red ocher, and strung on a strand of fiber string which is tied tightly around the neck. These necklaces are worn by all members of the tribe on any occasion.

291 *Human-hair Belts.*—The Murngin wear a belt or band made of human hair which fits tightly across the upper portion of the buttocks and around the sides as far as the hip bones, where strings are attached and tied in front of the pubic hair. There are two types, a bundle or cylindrical one, and a flat or sewn variety. One continuous human hair string about fifty to sixty feet long is looped back and forth and the end of the bunch of loops wrapped for one-half inch with fiber string or human hair. The belt has a norm of about twenty-two inches, which varies from twelve to twenty-four inches. It has about fifty-five strands in it, but varies from twenty-four to sixty-five. Frequently the opossum pubic covering is attached to this belt, although usually it is worn by itself. A single small loop may be left at each end to which the fiber string for tying is attached.

The flat type of belt is made with one continuous string looped about thirty times. Vegetable fiber or human hair string is tied about each end of the bundle, which is flattened by stitching with bands of fiber string at about three-inch intervals. This allows the belt to fit snugly against the buttocks of the wearer and across the small of the back.

292 Ceremonial human hair belts are made by wrapping red parrot feathers over each of the strands in the belt to form a solid layer of red. The wrapping material is pandanus leaf. These belts are always made from the hair [765] of dead persons, which limits the size of the belt. The strands varied, in the [784] few examined, from six to twelve in number. This belt is only worn on ceremonial occasions and no woman may see it, even though it is made from the hair of either men or women.

291 301 *Pubic Aprons.*—The pubic apron, usually of opossum fur string, is less an item of clothing than an article of adornment. Although it is an expression of the people's modesty, it is classed with necklaces and bracelets rather than as a covering for the genitalia. It is composed of a basal strand and a fringe. The basal strand is usually of fiber string, but occasionally human hair is used. The fringe is made of one continuous strand of opossum fur looped about the basal cord. Each loop is twisted into a two-ply tassel, which is about ten inches long for men and five to six inches for women. The ends of the basal strand are tied in a large knot to keep the loops from slipping off. The apron is attached to a belt.

285 *Baskets.*—Since all baskets are carrying baskets equipped with carrying-strings, they also have been placed in the category of things worn.

All basketry in this district is made by the twining technique. The inner layer of the pandanus leaf and water-lily fiber are the two materials used. The latter is found only in the open-work type of basket, while the former is generally used for the tightly woven mesh, and occasionally also for the

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

285 415 531 Red parrot feathers are woven or stuck into the men's baskets. Usually they form a small band around the top of the basket, sometimes a solid mass over the upper half of it, and again they outline the ordinary square pattern that covers the entire surface. Human hair is sometimes stitched on for an outline instead of feathers. It is also used as a fringe over the entire basket or on a line about two or three inches from the top. Opossum fur is also used as a fringe and to outline the diamond pattern.—Any of the described baskets may have from two to eight pendants of parrot feathers hanging from the rim of the basket to several inches beyond its bottom.

285 415 [482] B.—The large type of open-work basket has the greatest size of any found in this area. It is thirty-two inches by eighteen inches in size and has a mesh of three-eighths of an inch. It is carried by a woman by means of a fiber-string forehead band and is usually used for gathering cycad palm nuts. The smaller-sized open-work basket has a mesh of one-quarter inch. It normally is seventeen inches deep, but varies from fourteen to eighteen inches. It has a diameter variation of from six to eight inches. All open-mesh baskets are stitched at the top. None is ever decorated, and all of them are used by women to gather food and to carry their personal belongings.

361 *Armlets, Wristlets, and Anklets.*—The native armlets are usually made by the plaiting technique. The plait consists of from two to five strands, two being the normal number. The armlet is normally from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in width, but sometimes reaches a width of two inches. The diameter corresponds to the size of the wearer's arm. Wristlets, but not armlets, are made on the arm of the wearer by another person and worn until they fall off.

Spear grass is the usual material. The grass is split into two or three pieces and soaked in water for one or two days before it is ready for use. A small stick or bone is used for tucking in the free strands to give the ornament a smooth appearance and keep the edges from breaking to pieces. [531] Sometimes fiber string is wrapped about the armlets, and many are painted with angular designs.

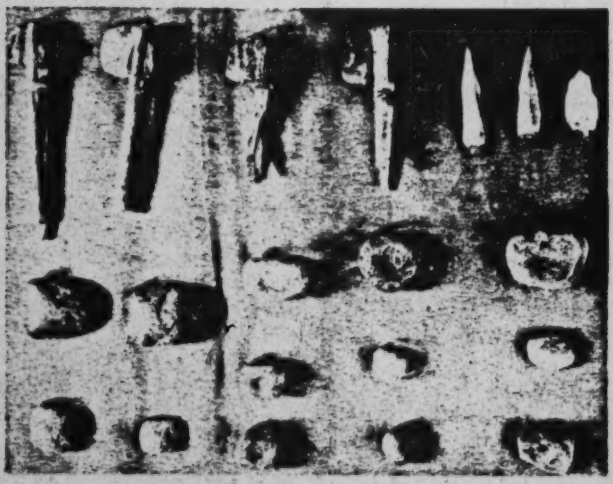
Women wear a series of armlets half up the upper arm, but men only put on a few.

Another variety of armlet is made from the end of a piece of cane. About a quarter-inch width of the reed is wrapped with fiber string which has feathers woven into it, or feathers are bound to the armlet with a cord. [237] Frequently from two to four parrot-feather string pendants, tipped with white cockatoo feathers, are hung from the armlet; these usually have a core of human hair on to which the feathers are wrapped with fiber string. The same technique is used for feathered string pendants as for other objects decorated with feathered string.

Anklets are sometimes made in the same way as armlets; but whereas the latter are worn by men, women, and children most of the time, the anklet is seldom worn.

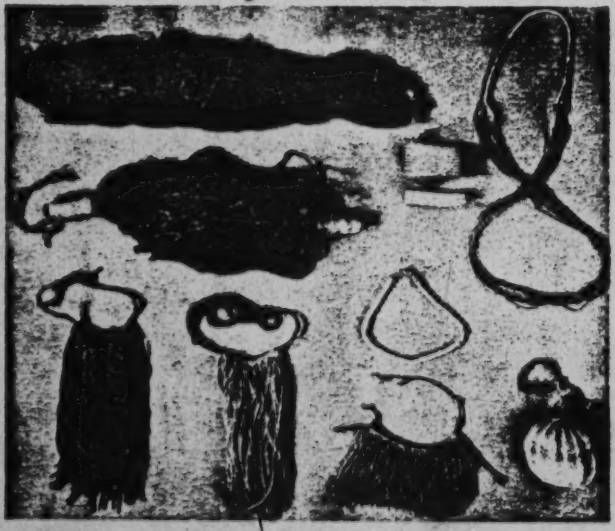
1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

412



Ia. *Top left:* Hafted Stone Axes.
Top right: Stone Knives (or Spear Heads).
Middle and lower left: Unhafted Axes.
Middle and lower right: Grinding Basins and Mullers.

291
301

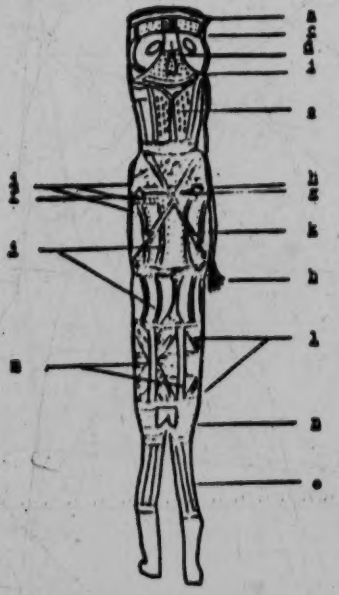


Ib. *Upper left:* Two Hair Belts.
Lower left: Two Men's Pubic Coverings.
Lower middle: One Woman's Pubic Covering.
Upper right: Armlets and Women's "Harness."
Extreme lower right: Spirit Bag.
Left center: Necklace of Fish Vertebrae.

[p. 55 & A]

The figure wears around its head a "bulkawalku ornament, and on its body a *'mailga*, the red-ochred jungle-string girdle which young girls often wear for decoration and for "strengthening" the breasts. A string pubic apron (*'mudpu*) is also worn, but more for decoration than for actual covering.

778
532
[301
291]



Text-figure A.

The text-figure A, which is a rough sketch of the *'Waawalak* figure in Plate I, figure 1, is a guide to the meaning of the pattern.

- *a* *'bulkawalku* head ornament, made of jungle-string fibre into which have been woven seagull down and parakeet feathers; the terminating pendant (*b*) is of wild-honey wax and seagull feathers.
- *c* the head-band, called *'marapipi*, *'kalamba*, or *'warambala*.
- *d* *'gu:lgul*, outline of cheek or groove between nose and eye.
- *e* the *'dayara* flower of the *'du:rilji* gum tree, associated with the *'Waawalak* in the song cycles.
- *f* small swelling breasts, *'diliyin'wirlkul*.
- *g* breast or chest ridge, *'gumul* or *'kulmalki*.
- *h* cicatrization.
- *i* small scars called *'kupu:wa:pu*, or "water painting," from the rain made by the python (see myth).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

796 Pythons. One sits on the thighs of the other in the trench, and they
535 have "coitus". These ceremonies are spread over a number of days,
881 often with a certain amount of repetition.

In the meantime, the *jiritja* men have been making the *jelmalandji*
796 emblems. It is said that "the *jiritja* have got a *dua* job", and they hunt
778 all the *dua* away from the special place near the sacred ground where
[616] the manufacture is in progress. This "giving the job" to the *jiritja* is termed *ir'womdji* or *maralwa*. They must be paid with food, clothing, tobacco and indigenous objects, not on the sacred ground but in the main camp. The *jelmalandji* are twelve to twenty feet in length, and about two and a half feet wide at the centre. They are formed with a solid pole, around which pads of grass and paperbark (and in these days blankets and bagging) are tied with native fibres. The outer covering of bark is then smeared with arm blood and red-ochre, on to which is fastened birds' down or wild cotton so that a meandering pattern is formed, symbolizing Julunggul. At the apex of the "post"
● [301] is a bunch of cockatoo feathers "like a man wears in his hair". Both *jelmalandji*, one larger than the other, have similar designs. But although one represents Julunggul, the other is said to be the "cabbage" or "wild coconut" (*gulwiri*) palm, which was standing near the Wauwalak's hut, or at the palm-tree swamp from which the blood was washed down to the sacred well (or billabong). Aborigines
[773] explain, "they made the Snake out of that tree", meaning either that the first *jelmalandji* was constructed from the palm tree, or that the Snake itself was derived from it. The latter is probably correct, for this "wild coconut" palm is said to be the spirit of Julunggul: "their spirits were standing in the shape of palm trees near Muruwul, when the Julunggul emerged from the well to swallow the Wauwalak".

While the *jiritja* are making the *jelmalandji*, the *dua* prepare the
796 feather down for body decoration: this has come from the *jiritja*,
237 who are paid for it. It is the *dua* who play the most important part in
301 the ceremonial dancing; and while the final touches are being put to
616 the *jelmalandji*, the *dua* actors decorate themselves, sticking on the feathers with arm blood. When everything is ready, the two moiety
[783] groups meet each other, and rub sweat over one anothers' eyes;[6] after this, each group may see what the other has done. The *jiritja* examine the body designs of the *dua*, and the latter may observe the *jelmalandji*.

6. That is, the *jiritja* rub sweat from their armpits over the eyes of the *dua*, and *vice versa*. This process is carried out when new *rangga* objects or *murelin* ceremonies are seen for the first time, or when novices or visitors are observing sacred dancing or ceremonial emblems (objects, body or bark paintings, and so on). It means that their eyes may now be opened, they can now see "with sacredness". "The old people have to do this to us before we can see"; for, as one informant explained, "it is like moving over some of the old Law to the youngest (younger generation), and we get trouble if we look straight away". It is called *bunggun'miriljanma*.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

On the same evening, the young boys "passing through" the Kunapipi are placed on the heaped-up earth beside the *ba'uma* (*kanala*), and a shallow trench, some fifty feet long, is extended from one end. The *jelmalandji* have not yet been brought out. Various groups of men, representing mainly opossums, dance down this trench towards the boys. The initiates are moved to the shallow trench, and the men dance along it into the *ba'uma*. Then the boys are moved and placed in the *ba'uma* itself: this is the core of their Kunapipi experience. They are covered with bark and told to go to sleep; and as they lie there, "covered up in the hut like the Wauwalak Sisters", men dance the yam, opossum, wild honey, rat, wallaby, iguana, native companion and kangaroo - all those animals, birds, reptiles and vegetables which the Wauwalak attempted to cook. They dance down the shallow trench and almost on to the boys.

Then, suddenly, the bark that covers the boys is removed: they are dazed, as if from sleep. The older Kunapipi leaders step forward and, taking sweat from under their armpits, rub the palms of their hands across the eyes of the boys. They tell them to look up: "See, the Julunggul are emerging from the waters!"

"Which way?" they ask.

As they look they see the two Snakes standing beside the *ba'uma*, each supported by one man: these are the two *jelmalandji*, one the Julunggul and the other the "palm" tree. The boys are "very surprised", asking "What's this? Where did they come from?"

"They are the *jelmalandji*", reply the old leaders. And the two *dua* men holding the *jelmalandji* begin to shake them, "making the Snakes dance".

"Ah! ah!" The boys keep staring up at the great towering *jelmalandji*.

Then the men dance a series of totemic dances, similar to those mentioned above, before the *jelmalandji* and the boys.

These are followed by the spectacular "pokiti" head-dress dance, performed by two of the older men. They wear tall, conically shaped head-dresses, built up on top of the head from a basis of grass or bark pads, bound tightly with human-hair twine so that they taper to a point; this in turn is decorated with arm blood upon which down has been stuck to form the Snake design, and cockatoo or native companion feathers are attached to the apex. The word "pokiti" is pidgin English; the real "outside" secular name (widely known) is *kundja*, and the "inside" sacred name *milali*; when the two old men dance together they are called *jalwaru-* (or *jalwul*) *milali*. The actors are decorated with birds' down, and bunches of leaves are attached to their upper arms.

The "pokiti" itself represents the short pandanus or screw palm, seen by the Wauwalak, growing in the swamp at Muruwul: the movement of the head-dress in the dance signifies the pandanus

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

796 835 begins with surreptitious meetings at night in the nearby bush. There may be more men than women attending the ceremony, and it may so happen that one woman will have a number of Kunapipi partners to whom she will go. Her husband realizes that this period is charged with social effervescence, so that her indulgence is viewed as a conventional expression, and as an important element in the atmosphere of general goodwill. Some women, however, prefer to wait until the last night, being emotionally excited, then, to an abnormal degree. Prior to this final stage, there is general exchange [832] of obscenities and erotic allusions between men and women, and between the proposed Kunapipi partners.

796 535 786 Two or three nights before the finale the men return to the sacred ground, and sitting around the fires begin to sing parts of the Kunapipi cycle relating to ceremonial copulation. The women come into the ground, some decorated with feathered string headbands. All [301] women may attend, but only those decorated and ochred are "to dance for coitus". Their special form of dancing is called *ngamamali*; they dance before the singing men. They dance the bandicoot dance, hitting their legs together to make a rhythmic sound that blends with the song and the beating sticks.

Then the head Kunapipi woman, a tribal sister or father's sister of the male leader, dances forward, leading the other women[12] back towards the main camp. As they dance along they call out, in just the same way as the men in the *djunggawon* do when they enter the main camp. And like those men, the women too symbolize Julunggul moving towards the Wauwalak. Instead of calling it Julunggul or *gundaru* as the men do, the women call it Kitjin. "But it is the same Dreaming Snake, even though it is called by a different name: for the women call it Kitjin so that we (the men) won't know the real meaning." They turn away again from the main camp and return to the sacred ground, calling out their sacred term, Kitjin! Kitjin! and warning the men: "Don't call this name, or watch us;[13] don't come [778] close and see us, or your bellies will come up like pregnant women". And the men sit down quietly, with heads bent, for they may not look directly at the dancing women: the women are *mareiin* (sacred), just like the dancers in a totemic ceremony.

12. It is said that all these women are "big women", and none are young girls. No young boys are present, for the initiates are at one end of the ground "asleep", or covered up with paperbark or blankets; children are left in charge of the old women or young girls who have remained in the main camp.

This really means that the women attending the Kunapipi are married; the young girls are those who are unmarried, betrothed, or who have not yet [881] reached puberty. We are not discussing in this context ritual defloration of [836] young girls, as an adjunct of the Kunapipi, just prior to or on their attaining puberty.

13. That is, the men cannot look straight at the dancing women, "we are frightened of the power they have". Actually, however, they do see them dancing forward.

142
301
304

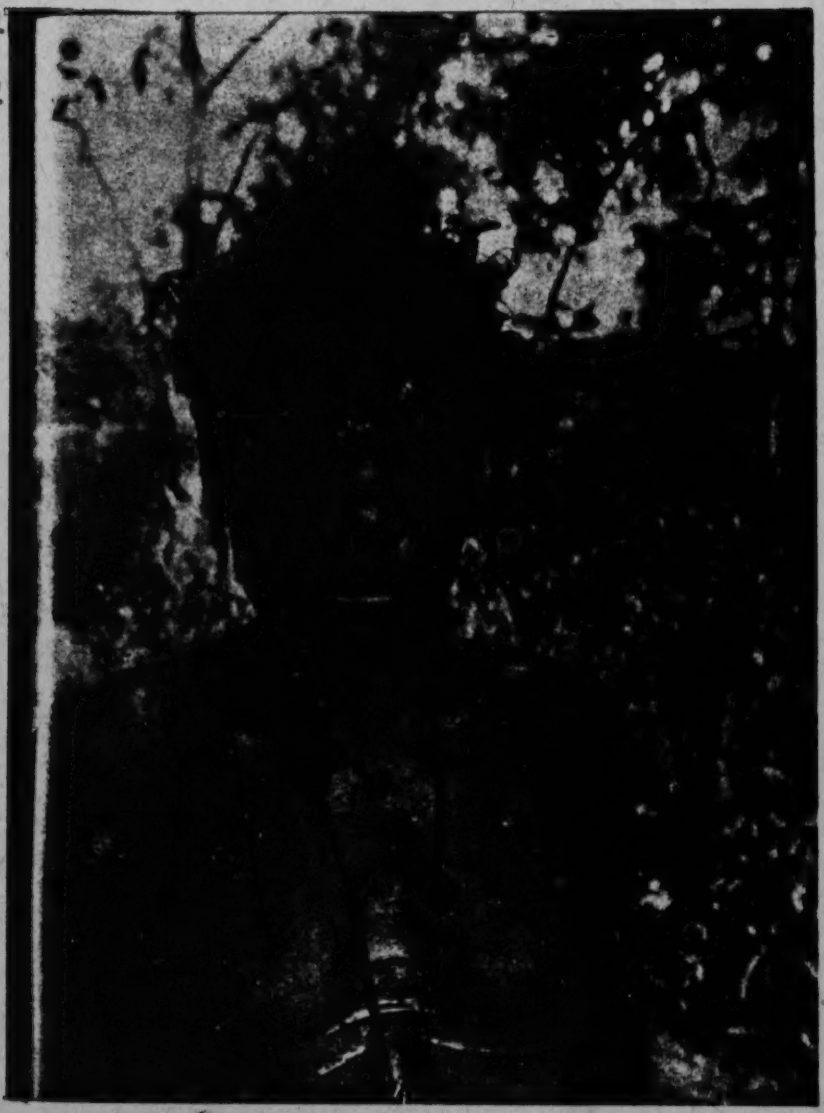


Plate 6: Manwulan at Yirrkalla.

[p. 25(c)]

142
301
302

Plate 8a: Naburdja at Yirrkalla; a wife of Djirin.

Plate 8b: Djirin at Yirrkalla; a son of Wonggu.

[304]

[p. 25(E)]

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954.
OI17 Murngin OI17

142
291
301
516

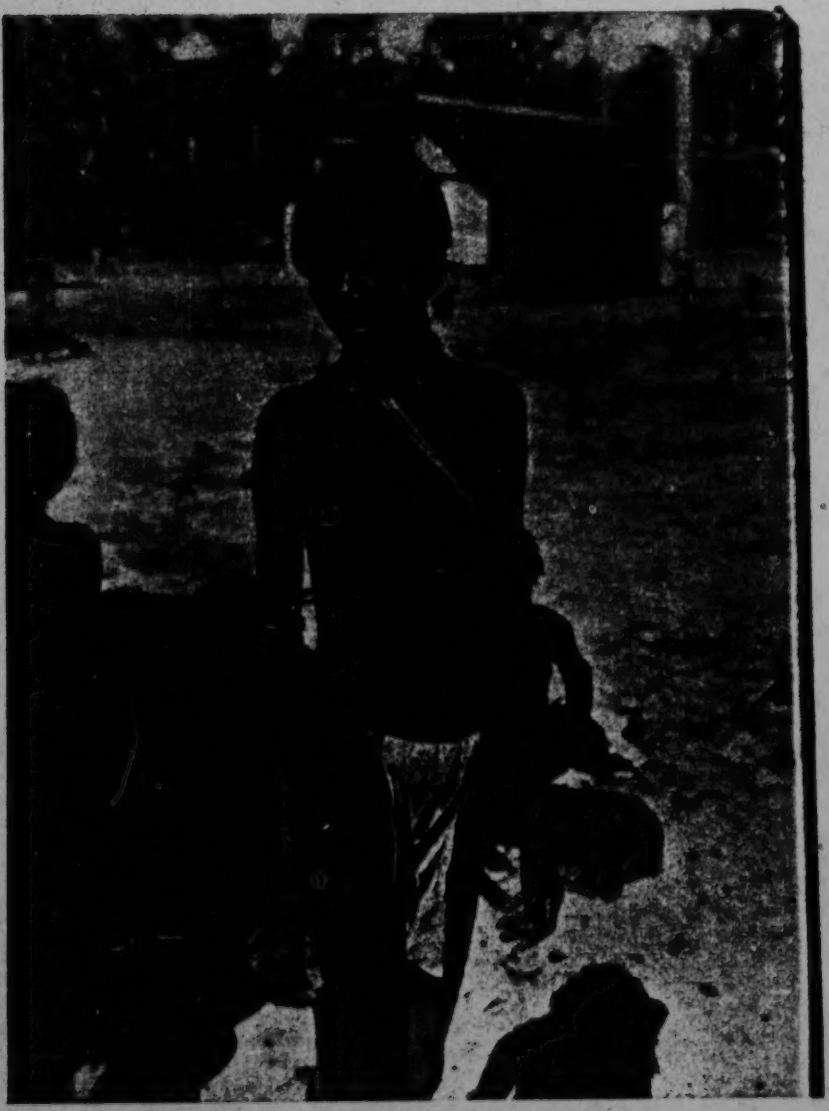


Plate 11: Bulaninda at Yirrkalla; daughter of Dagiar (Tuckiar).

[p. 25(H)]

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

316
324
411
431
516
301
302

Plate 1. A craftsman at ŋillipiḍji, the far-famed stone spear quarry in the hinterland of Blue Mud Bay, examining flint spear heads called *ŋämbi*. These spear heads are encased in a special sheath of paperbark (*Melaleuca*) to which the name *ḍjalk* is applied, which gives its name to *ḳumur ḍjalk*, the quarter in the ceremonial exchange cycle from which most of these fine spear heads enter North and Central Arnhem Land. On the left are two bundles each containing about a dozen *ŋämbi*, neatly wrapped in paperbark, ready for transport inland for *wesj*, as goodwill presents for partners within the ceremonial exchange cycle. The smooth stone implements on the left are the hammer stones used by the spear maker to strike off flakes from a core of flint dug out of the quarry.

[Facing p. 222]
[p. 222 is blank]

142
291
E42
301
516

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OII7 Murngin OII7

[facing p. 42]

Plate 2. The family is the unit of social life and lives a more or less independent existence within the horde. A man of Blue Mud Bay with his wives and young children. The breakwind of boughs is the only form of shelter used at night during most of the dry season.

142
291
301
516
412
222

The woman is the provider of the vegetable food, which forms the chief food supply.

Plate 9. Women of Blue Mud Bay with their yam sticks, gathering corms of the Tall Spike Rush (*Heleocharis sphacelata*), which, for several months towards the end of the dry season, is one of the staple foods.

[p. 58(D)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

142
301
302

PORTRAIT OF A YULENGOR

After a prolonged vendetta, Wonggu was the last of his horde; now he is the father of fifty children

[Frontispiece- facing title page]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

your head, and his nose has a ridge like yours. I never noticed before just how much he resembles you, especially when he walks and swings his elbows. He's a splendid lad.'

Naratjin was amusing his small son beside his windbreak in the cool of the day, when Maulin, a man from another horde and moiety, spoke thus to him from the door of his hut. Nomads are extraordinarily susceptible to praise and readily respond to what we would call flattery. But Naratjin was delighted at what he had heard and set about preparing the customary present of food for the flatterer. He painted his son with coloured clay and decorated him with armlets and corslet of string and bird feathers, and took him to visit Maulin. Looking up and seeing the child in all his glory, the flatterer expressed his pleasure before graciously accepting the present. At first I suspected the flatterer of 'singing for his supper', but this somewhat rare form of praise is genuine; it is spontaneously given in public, and Yulengor who may be sitting near by courteously lower their voices whilst the 'toast' is proposed.

A carefully preserved etiquette governs the distribution of food. Choice parts of the kill, such as back legs and loins, go to the old men, before the rest is divided according to the age and importance of those present. Generally the meal proceeds peacefully, and each hunter receives his share with a studied indifference which is under careful control, for the greatest importance is attached to good food.

Quarrels can arise from the unfair distribution of food, as when Jaua brought in a kangaroo to share with his brothers and an old man of the Ngaimil horde, and the Ngaimil elder quickly muttered an incantation over it, declaring that he had thereby made it sacred to his Ngaimil totem. By his act, the old man made it possible for him to eat the meat but impossible for the youth who had killed the animal to

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Maragin O117

cattle to Yirrkala it was not long before their likeness too appeared on bark sheets.

I saw little-known caves on the Wessel Islands, in which totemic myths had been painted side by side with Japanese pearlers, Macassar proas, and odd European wanderers. Rock paintings are common in many parts of Australia, except in Arnhem Land where outcrops of rock are so rare that only three lots of rock paintings have been found. Here the primitive artist uses a bark sheet, which in itself indicates some measure of aesthetic impulse, for it is not easily obtained and has no permanence.

The Serpent in sacred myths is spiritually present in the 'maraian' or log painted with totemic symbols. For ceremonies, the maraian is kept in a bush shelter deep in the scrub, and initiated men guard it till the moment arrives for its dramatic elevation. They push their way through the shelter toward the over-awed initiates, and grovel, shudder, squirm, and roll over and over with strained and contorted faces, as if overcome by dread of the long maraian so carefully borne across their bodies. Wriggling along in the rear, the leader of the ceremony blows through the maraian and produces the low booming sound so feared by women and children and believed to be the voice of the Serpent.

Designs on maraian are made from coloured clays, string, and feathers. Hundreds of yards of string are wound on some of them, and the effect is enhanced by weaving into it white birds'-down, red and green parrots' feathers, or opossum fur. Red ochre-stone from a totem centre on Elcho Island is traded for hundreds of miles, and is in demand because of a greasy property which makes it adhere to the skin. Ordinary clay-paints crack and peel, but this is overcome by crushing orchid stems and smearing the sticky juice over the body before applying the paint. Participants in ceremonies decorate themselves with totemic designs, and glue long lines of white birds'-down on their

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

bodies. This glue is obtained by cutting a vein in the arm, painting the blood on the skin and adding feathers before it congeals. Paint brushes are made from human hair or from twigs.

I remember watching Wonggu mix his colours in shells, flatten his bark, and prepare his orchid gum. Only then did he realize that he needed a brush, so he leaned over and cut a tuft of hair from his son's head, bound it to a twig and commenced his mural.

A well-known anthropologist stayed with us at Yirrkala and obtained a big selection of aboriginal arts and crafts and bark paintings. He paid the Yulengor well, and they gave full play to their ingenuity, manufacturing such things as bows and arrows which, incidentally, are not used by aborigines. I saw several paintings in the collection in the usual red, yellow, white, and black, together with an additional vivid blue. Not having seen blue before, I could not account for it till later in the day my wife chanced to remark that several of her blue-bags had disappeared.

Body decorations are made by mutilating the skin, and one pleasing mutilation resembles a string of beads on a woman's breast, where each bead is a raised nodule of flesh about the size of a pea. Women and girls sear a pattern on the skin with firesticks, and rub pipeclay into the wound; a more common practice is to cut the marks into the flesh before filling them with clay. For reasons of vanity and custom, a woman has a few cicatrices across her hips, and possibly on her shoulders, and in the event of sorrow she adds some to her midriff. If a brother should die, a sister paints horizontal lines across the backs of her legs below the knees, and when his bones are being collected she substitutes gashes for her clay markings.

It was explained that a man gets a friend to cut the customary perpendicular lines from his shoulder and halfway to his elbow, but he himself makes the more important

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

cicatrix across his chest. These raised shiny ridges stand out like cords, and once they have healed they seem to cause no inconvenience. Clay is rubbed into the wound so that it will heal slowly, and the mutilated flesh becomes a raised ridge. Men with sufficient vanity treat any accidental wound in this manner, and produce broad, irregular raised areas and cicatrices over their bodies. The Stone Age warrior is proud of his cicatrices and regards them as a form of beauty. Burramurra told me that they are a sign of manliness, and added: 'When women see a man with rows of long thick cicatrices across his chest they are attracted by the glamour.' 304 [832]

Arm-bands are woven from split cane and string and are adorned with opossum fur or birds' feathers; everyone seems to wear from one to a dozen of them. Cane armlets are the most common; they are tight fitting and are usually worn till they fall to pieces. Men's muscles swell round them; as children grow, armlets become so tight and painful that they chafe the skin and have to be cut away. Mothers and fathers decorate their children with armlets and string corselets, which are said to prevent illness and sores. 301 [237] [751]

Vast quantities of string and rope resembling raffia are made from the inner bark of several trees. Varieties include string as fine as cotton, fishing-lines, rope for turtle and dugong harpoons, and two-inch cable for mooring canoes. In the making of string it is a common sight to see an old man squatting in the sand and pulling the hairs off the inside of his thigh and then picking out three fibres of bark and spreading them on his hairless thigh. With a hand on the fibres he rolls them toward him and finally with a quick thrust of the wrist he reverses the action and rolls them forward, uniting them into a single string. Fresh fibre is added as required, till in about an hour fifty or sixty feet of uniform string is completed. Harpoon and heavy ropes are 283

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

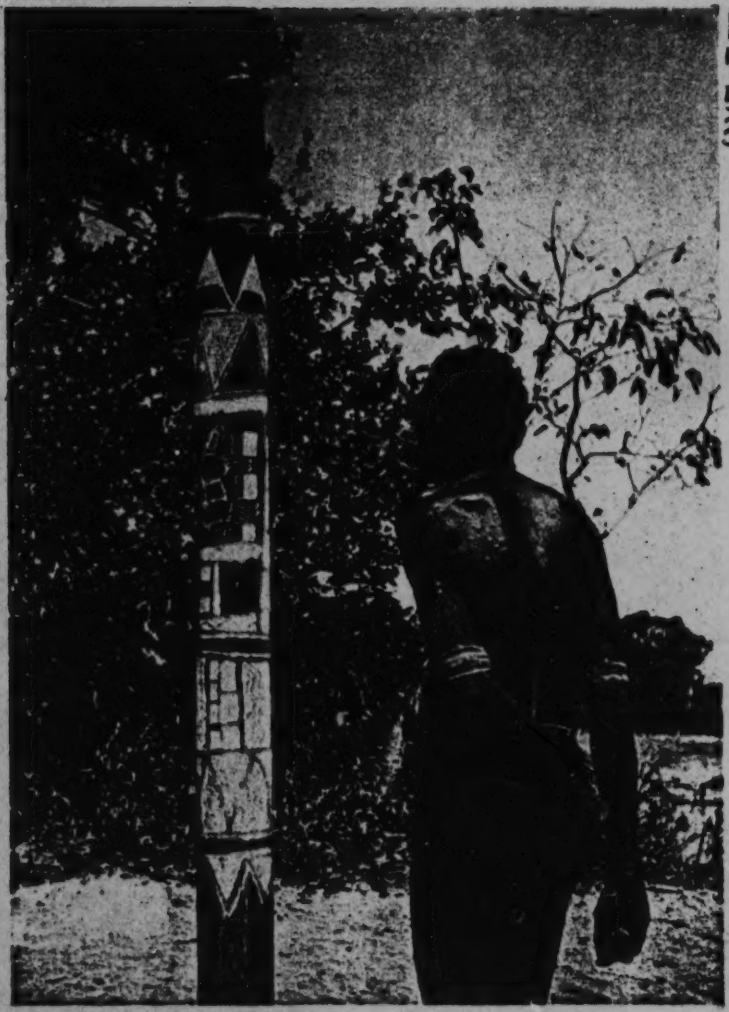
of the hordes sit apprehensively under shady trees whilst the men paint intricate totemic designs on the initiates. More often than not several hordes meet for the occasion, and all the boys between eight and ten years of age are prepared by relatives. Armlets, dilly-bags and trinkets are hung around their necks for decorative purposes, and sometimes they carry a knife or steel tomahawk. When their moment arrives, the boys are brought to the ceremonial ground, and the men dance and sing with increasing emotion, till at last they bunch together and with kindly reluctant movements force each boy into the arms of a crouching man who supports and holds him. Women relatives close in and dance around the tightly packed circle and wail in rising agitation, others gash their heads, and girl playmates of the initiates cry amongst the trees and cut their breasts with sharp shells. An invitation is often extended to a visiting Yulengor to perform the actual operation, which is frequently prolonged by the use of a stone knife or spearhead. The loud purposeful calls of the men seldom drown the cries of the victim. It is then that a wave of emotion sweeps over the entire camp.

When a nomad is sick the relatives will crouch tightly around him, and their excessively mournful sympathy is conducive to moans and vapours from the patient. Eye-rolling and groans will accompany even simple sprains and abdominal pains and inspire sympathetic cries and wails. At the approach of death, the next of kin draw near pathetically brushing flies from the patient, attempting to sustain warmth with sheets of paper-bark, but unwittingly stifling him in a turgid atmosphere. There are wails and shrieks if continuous movement is not seen from some part of the body. Commotion at death is indescribable; women deliberately hurl themselves on the ground with loud cries, and they wail loudly and tremulously as they stab their heads with sharp stones and shells.

Egyptians preserved mummified bodies in pyramids,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

142
764
531
301



BURIAL POST IN A DESERTED CAMP

[facing p150]